

Dear Chairman Martin:

I am writing to challenge the Comcast/Time Warner/Adelphia merger (FCC Docket No. 05-192) and the AT&T/BellSouth merger (FCC Docket No. 06-74). Allowing the largest telecommunications company and the two largest cable companies in the United States to grow even larger does not serve the public interest.

The concentration of media power is a growing problem in this country. One impact is to reduce the actual amount of news reported since companies share news and feature stories company wide if they are presentable in any local market besides where produced.

Though we have more channels available than ever before, they are increasingly falling under the control of a handful of giant corporations with no real interest in the quality of programming--only the quantity. The programming reflects the lack of diversity. Of all the cable channels we get, we hardly watch more than six hours a week of other than movies. At one time we watched at least twenty hours a week, but many shows on today are cheap remakes of old themes or the old shows themselves.

The cost of broadband service also remains out of reach for many households. I have only one choice, my cable company, because I am too many wire miles from the switching center serving my neighborhood. I deeply resent also that by the city issuing a franchise I have no choice among cable companies. Americans, including me, are hungry for more competition in services and for more original, non-redundant programming. However, these mergers will only starve Americans of this needed competition.

Allowing AT&T to combine with BellSouth will give the top three broadband providers control of over half of all broadband connections in the country. At the same time, the Time Warner/Comcast/Adelphia merger will give Comcast and Time Warner increased power over entire regions of the United States, allowing rates to rise even as the digital divide continues to grow.

The FCC should block these transactions or impose strict conditions to protect free speech and competition under its "public interest standard." If the FCC decides to allow either of these mergers, it should require the following conditions:

1. Subscribers must be able to choose from competitive Internet Service Providers ("open access"). The FCC should also ensure that these companies cannot discriminate against any Internet content or rival service and that every service will be treated exactly the same ("Network Neutrality").
2. Companies must be required to sell broadband access separate from video and telephone service,

and at the same price ("naked broadband" or "unbundling"). As soon as comcast bought AT&T;s cable broadband customers it raised its rates by \$10 while giving a \$10 discount to customers who also bought cable service. That is unfair competition. I really do want different companies providing my telecommunications, entertainment and broadband services. If it weren't for bundled pricing, I would have DISH network instead of cable TV.

3. Any subscriber must be able to connect any device to the network (such as a Wi-Fi router) that does not harm the network.

4. Take steps to protect public access programming ("PEG"). Cable companies have become less responsive to the needs and requirements of communities. The quality of public accountability in local franchise agreements has declined, as big companies leverage their power to squeeze local governments. Likewise, telecommunications giants — like AT&T — are trying to eliminate the remaining vestiges of effective local oversight and control altogether.

5. Independent programmers must be able to reach subscribers. We are required to buy channels we don't want or need because providers of video service bundle them together.

6. Any company that owns both programming and video systems should be required to provide competitors with access to their regional sports and other programming needed to offer competing services, so consumers will still have real choices.

7. All megamerger companies should be required to serve all metropolitan markets in the United States within ten years with or without local franchises. Without competition, the end product is poor and the pricing high.

In conclusion, I ask the FCC to consider the interests of the people like me who pay the cable, telephone and broadband bills and watch the programming. Many of us already have enough trouble trying to afford broadband or cable TV, yet broadband is becoming more central to active participation in community life and access to information services.

Please don't make it even harder for us to find competitors, or make it easier for Comcast, Time Warner and AT&T to raise prices or block local and independent voices. They also shouldn't be allowed to bundle products for discounts. It forces me to pay more for that which I use less and less and will drop if the price gets too high. Indeed, I have considered just subscribing to NetFlix instead of getting any cable TV, but then my broadband bill with comcast would increase by \$10.